

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8354

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11542: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: PRENTICE CUTS TIES WITH UNION

1. REG PRENTICE, THE BELEAGUERED RIGHT-WING LABOR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (AND CURRENTLY MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT) HAS SEVERED HIS MAJOR UNION LINKS BY RESIGNING FROM THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (TGWU) PANEL OF SPONSORED MP'S. HE WAS FORMERLY AN OFFICIAL OF THE TGWU.

2. PRENTICE, WHO HAS BEEN REJECTED AS A CANDIDATE BY HIS NEWHAM NORTH EAST CONSTITUENCY WROTE TGWU LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY, ARTHUR TODD, THAT HE WAS RESIGNING FOR "POLIT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ICAL RATHER THAN PERSONAL" REASONS. HE SAID THAT THE

"SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE UNIONS AND THE LABOR PARTY IS ONE OF THE MOST OUT-OF-DATE FEATURES OF THAT SYSTEM. IT MADE SENSE YEARS AGO - NOW IT IS BOTH IRRELEVANT AND DANGEROUS."

3. PRENTICE ADDED THAT HE HAD BEEN CAMPAIGNING FOR A LABOR PARTY WHICH HE BELIEVED WAS SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC RATHER THAN MARXIST AND FOR POLICIES BASED ON THE NATIONAL INTEREST RATHER THAN CLASS OR DOGMA. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF THE LABOR PARTY WERE TO GOVERN SUCCESSFULLY IT WOULD HAVE TO DO SO WITHOUT ANY SPECIAL FAVORS TO THE UNIONS: "WE SHOULD", HE SAID, "ABANDON THE WHOLE RIGAMAROLE OF AFFILIATED MEMBERS, BLOCK VOTE AT THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE AND TRADE UNION SPONSORED MP'S." HE ALSO SAID THAT THE UNIONS, IF THEY WISHED TO GIVE MONEY TO THE LABOR PARTY, COULD DO SO WITHOUT FORMAL TIES AS UNIONS DO IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

4. PRENTICE MAY SIMPLY HAVE "LUMPED BEFORE HE WAS PUSHED". JACK JONES, THE LEADER OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS, HAS INDICATED TO US IN THE PAST THAT PRENTICE WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF TUNE WITH THE UNION. JONES REGARDS PRENTICE AS AN ARCH RIGHT-WINGER MORE AT HOME IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY THAN IN THE PRESENT LABOR PARTY. THERE IS VERY LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT PRENTICE'S CONCEPT OF UNION-LABOR PARTY RELATIONSHIP WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY EFFECTED IN THE NEAR TERM. WHILE THERE ARE SOME TRADE UNION OFFICIALS SUCH AS LEN MURRAY, TUC GENERAL SECRETARY, WHO ARE TUC HEADQUARTERS-BASED AND WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE UNIONS BECOMING MORE INDEPENDENT OF THE PARTY, THIS IS NOT A WIDESPREAD BELIEF AMONG UNION LEADERS AND THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE TRADE UNION/PARTY UMBILICAL CORD WILL BE SEVERED.

ARMSTRONG

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